

The Circuit Writer



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ABOUT NORTHERN NEW JERSEY METHODISM - REPRINT OF "OUTLINE HISTORY
OF NEW JERSEY METHODISM BROUGHT DOWN TO A.D. 1970" FROM
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The following outline is sketched principally from the General Minutes. Perhaps some who are in possession of these volumes will be pleased to see embodied in a compact form the facts herewith presented; while others who have never seen them will be gratified to have this historical matter spread before them.

Methodism was introduced into the province, now State of New Jersey, at an early period in our denominational history. Occupying the intermediate space between the two cities of New York and Philadelphia, the preachers were accustomed to "preach as they went," and entered every open door, and doubtless presented a free and full salvation to the natives of Jersey [as they] travelled over their soil. Capt. Webb was [one of the] pioneers of New Jersey Methodism, [who] preached the Gospel in his usual stentorian [manner] to the inhabitants of New Brunswick, at [which place] his detachment of the British army [was quartered.]

When Asbury arrived in this country the work of [planting] Methodism in New Jersey had already been accomplished. At the first conference, which was held in Philadelphia in the month of June, 1773, New Jersey returned two hundred members. John King, an Englishman, and Wm. Watters, an American, were appointed to labor here, and reported a handsome increase. Watters was the first minister raised up among us in this country. The membership during the year was augmented to two hundred and fifty-seven. The condition of the work seemed to warrant its division, accordingly Trenton Circuit was constituted from the northern part of the province, with William Watters in charge. He was to change with Daniel Ruff, who was preaching the Gospel over the Delaware River, in Pennsylvania, on Chester Circuit. The southern New Jersey Circuit took the name of Greenwich, and had Philip Ebert in charge. He was directed to change with Joseph Yearbry, the colleague of Daniel Ruff, on Chester. The report of members the ensuing spring was three hundred.

In 1775 John King and Daniel Ruff were on Trenton, and William Duke on Greenwich. The Revolutionary troubles depressed the work, and the membership decreased this year more largely in proportion than any year of our history up to the present time. After twelve months had elapsed there were only one hundred and fifty members remaining. At the conference of 1776, it was thought best to unite the two circuits. The consolidated work took the old name, that of the province.

In 1776 Robert Lindsey and John Cooper were the preachers. They succeeded in keeping together the trembling flock and adding ten to the numbers. The following year (1777) Henry Kenneday and Thomas M'Clure were on New Jersey circuit. That year the membership was reported in the aggregate. There were in the whole connection six thousand and ninety-five members, and the number of travelling preachers was twenty-nine. In 1778 Daniel Ruff was again on New Jersey Circuit, and reported a further decrease, only one hundred and forty being returned to him.

In 1779 the New Jersey and Philadelphia circuits were thrown together. Philip Cox, Joshua Dudley and D. Ruff were appointed to the extensive field. This union did not continue long, for the circuits were reported separately at the end of the year. There was this year a looking up of the infant cause. New Jersey reported

on hundred and ninety-six members, being the large proportionate increase of fifty-six. Philadelphia held its own and added one. There were ninety Methodists within that charge. It is possible the circuit was sundered during the year. The revival in New Jersey and the separate report indicate this. Quarterly conferences in these days frequently cut their circuits in two.

In 1780 New Jersey appears again without the embarrassing appendage of a great city. William Gill, John James and Richard Garrettson were the preachers. All things considered, this was a strong force. Gill was a truly great man. He was one of the brightest and steadiest lights that shone out in the early horizon of our Methodism. Lee speaks of him as unequaled as a man, Christian and minister. James and Garrettson were ardent and zealous. James travelled only this one year. The spirit of God was poured out, and a wonderful revival followed. An impetus was given to the cause in our state that year that she feels to this day. The number reported at the end of the year was five hundred and twelve, being the astonishing increase of three hundred and sixteen. The circumstances of the country were apparently the most unpropitious for the work of God. The American army of the north was stationed at Morristown, in great privation and distress, and the entire province was in unquiet and alarm, and yet an unprecedented success attended the labors of these holy men. One effect of this revival was the division of the work.

In 1781 James O. Cromwell and Henry Metcalf traveled East Jersey circuit, which included all the northern part of the state. West Jersey, which comprised the southern part, had for its senior minister Caleb B. Pedicord, a man of a seraphic spirit, presenting strong points of resemblance in his character and ministry to the sainted Summerfield; and Joseph Cromwell was his colleague. East Jersey reported two hundred and eighty-two; West Jersey three hundred and seventy-five. Total, six hundred and fifty-seven; an increase of one hundred and forty-five. In 1782 John Tunnell and Joseph Everett were on East Jersey; Joshua Dudley and Richard Jay on West Jersey. East Jersey returned five hundred and thirty-eight, West Jersey four hundred and ninety members. Total, one thousand and twenty-eight. A great work was accomplished this year, and three hundred and seventy-one was the net increase.

In 1783 the New Jersey ministerial force was increased. Four preachers were sent to East Jersey--Samuel Rowe, James Thomas, Francis Spry and William Ringold. West Jersey was favored with the ministry of Woolman Hickson and John Magary, but the numbers fell off in the state. The decrease was sixty-five. In 1784 Samuel Dudley and William Phoebus were on East Jersey; Samuel Rowe, William Partridge, and John Fidler on West Jersey. We are unable to trace the condition of the cause in this state that year, for the members were again reported in the aggregate. There were eighteen thousand members and one hundred and four preachers in the entire connection. This year the Church was regularly organized, and received its present episcopal form of government. In the spring of 1785 elders districts appear for the first time in the Minutes. Thomas S. Chew presided over a district including East and West Jersey circuits, with the new circuit of Trenton, and New York, and Long Island. The missions of Shelburne, Port Roseway, and Antigua, were attached to his district also. It is not at all probable, however, that he visited either Nova Scotia or the West Indies, where those missions existed. It was an accommodation to Bishop Asbury to have intelligence sent to him through the elder at New York. Letters from either of these missions could reach that point more certainly and more frequently than any other in the country, and Chew, knowing the whereabouts of the Bishop, could easily forward to him. Adam Cloud and Matthew Greentree were stationed on East Jersey; Wm. Phoebus, Thomas Ware, and Robert Sparks, on West Jersey; Robert Cloud, John M'Closkey, and Jacob Brush, on Trenton. These were all strong men, some of them great men. At the end of the year the numbers were, East Jersey, three hundred and sixty-five; Trenton, three hundred and fifty-two; West Jersey, Four hundred and ninety-two. Total, one thousand two hundred and nine.

In 1786 John Tunnell returned to New Jersey as one of its elders, and Thomas S. Chew took charge of a southern district. Tunnell's district comprised East Jersey, New York, Long Island, and the new circuit of Newark. Thomas Vasey was elder of a district including only two circuits, Trenton and West Jersey. Robert Sparks and Robert Cann were on Trenton; Jacob Brush, John Simmons and Jacob Burton on West Jersey; Robert Cloud on Newark; John M'Claskey and Ezekiel Cooper, on East Jersey. They reported for West Jersey five hundred and fifty-seven whites, eight colored; Trenton, three hundred and seventy-two; East Jersey, four hundred and sixty-five; and Newark Circuit was reported under the name of Elizabethtown as containing two hundred and forty members. As Newark is displaced so singularly by Elizabethtown, it is presumable that no impression whatever had been made upon Newark during this year. These numbers foot up the handsome sum of one thousand six hundred and thirty-four whites, and eight colored. This was the first of any distinction being made in the report because of color.

In 1787 Thomas Foster was elder. His district included, besides the four New Jersey circuits, New York, Long Island and New Rochelle. Robert Cloud and Thomas Morrell, the father of Rev. F.A. Morrell, of the New Jersey Conference, were on the Newark Circuit, this year called by the new name Elizabethtown. Ezekiel Cooper and Nathaniel B. Mills were on Trenton; Robert Cann, John M'Claskey, and John Millburn on West Jersey; Simon Pile and Cornelius Cook on East Jersey. The report at the end of the year was five hundred and fifty-five whites, and three colored, for East Jersey; but Flanders displaced the name of East Jersey, both in the report of numbers and in the list of appointments. Salem also displaced the name of West Jersey; so in the spring of 1788 the time-honored names of Flanders in the north and Salem in the south, became the designations of circuits. West Jersey, under the name of Salem, reported seven hundred and four whites and twenty-four colored; Trenton, five hundred and twenty-six; Elizabethtown, two hundred and twenty whites, fourteen colored. Total, two thousand and five whites and forty-one colored.

In 1788 James O. Cromwell was elder of a district comprising the four New Jersey circuits alone. On Salem, Joseph Cromwell, Nathaniel B. Mills, and John Cooper were stationed; on Trenton, John Merrick, Thomas Morrell, and Jethro Johnson; on Elizabethtown, John M'Claskey and Simon Pile, on Flanders the two brothers Lee, Jesse and John, with Aaron Hutchinson. Salem, Trenton and Flanders, were six weeks' circuits, and Elizabethtown took four weeks to get through the appointments. Never was a six weeks' circuit favored with a trio of better preachers or of better men that had Flanders this year. There was a decrease in the membership of three hundred and one whites, and an increase of four colored. The aggregate for the whole state was one thousand seven hundred and four whites, and forty-five colored.

In 1789 James O. Cromwell continued in charge of the district, and for the first time the term "presiding elder" was used; but the next year its use was discontinued, and not again resumed until 1797, a period of eight years. The district comprised six appointments; the new circuit of Burlington appearing among the New Jersey circuits, and Newburgh, in New York, being included in his jurisdiction. A. Hutchinson and Daniel Coombs were sent to Flanders; John Merrick and John Cooper to Elizabethtown; J. M'Claskey and William Jackson to Burlington; Joseph Cromwell and Richard Swain to Trenton; Simon Pile, Jethro Johnson, and Sylvester Hutchinson, the brother of Aaron, to Salem. They returned two thousand two hundred and seventy-four whites, and eighty-nine colored, as the aggregate of New Jersey Methodism.

In 1790 J.O. Cromwell was still elder of New Jersey district, which comprised the same appointments as the year before, with the addition of a new circuit in West Jersey, called Bethel, and the setting off of Elizabethtown to New York district. Thomas Morrell was the elder over that district which covered the appointments of New York, Long Island, Newburgh, New Rochelle, and Elizabethtown. Flanders Circuit was traveled by Richard Swain, and probably one was supplied. William Dougherty,

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whose name is as ointment poured forth, was with Joseph Cromwell on Salem. Robert Cann and William Jackson were on Bethel, the new circuit. The aggregate of members two thousand two hundred and ninety-six whites, and seventy-two colored.

We intend resuming the outline bringing it down to the commencement of the present century at some convenient future period. G.

Warren Co., N.J.

CELEBRATING THE HERITAGE

ELIZABETH: Park United Methodist Church celebrated the 100th anniversary of the founding of their congregation with a weekend program April 18-20, 1975. The celebration began on Friday evening with a service in Spanish conducted by The Rev. Diego Flores of the Westhampton (Long Island) U.M. Church and a special homecoming service on Sunday to which pastor, ministers and church members were invited. The Rev. John B. Brown is the 32nd pastor of the church.

LITTLE FALLS: A gala 150th anniversary celebration is planned for June 8, 1975. Dr. Rowe of Drew will be the guest "circuit rider!"

MORRISTOWN: The historic clock in the church's tower is now ringing out the time over Morristown's green after a long silence. The clock, which was drenched during the late church fire, was restarted October 15, 1974 when electric power was restored to the timing motor that drives the hands of the two 4 foot high clock faces. According to Margaret Eckman's WITNESS OF THE SPIRIT church history, the first bell in the spire was cracked while being rung for a Morristown fire in 1883. The present, much larger bell of 4,650 pounds, was hoisted into position in November, 1883.

OTHERS: THIS IS A REGULAR COLUMN in our Newsletter. If your church is planning an anniversary celebration or preparing a history, please contact the editor!

CHURCH HISTORY CONTECT - Awards to be presented during 1875 Conference!

Several local churches have submitted histories of their churches published during the calendar year 1974 for our second annual Church History Recognition Contest. Awards will be presented during the 1975 Conference meeting in June.

If your church has already published or plans to publish a history of your local church in 1975, we urge you to enter it in the annual contest sponsored by the Conference Commission on Archives and History. Large or small, pamphlet or hard-bound volume, mimeographed or printed, all histories produced during 1975 are eligible. Several have already been received. Each history will become part of the Conference's permanent collection.

MAIL ONE COPY TO: Dr. Kenneth E. Rowe, Drew University Library, Madison, New Jersey 07940 by February 1, 1976. Awards will be announced during the 1976 session of Conference.

ANNUAL DINNER MEETING AT DREW, Tuesday, May 13, 1975, 7:00 P.M. University Commons, Private Dining Room, \$4.75 per person. For reservations call the Rev. Paul Spiecker, 427-0725.

PROGRAM: Dr. Lambdin on Henry Boehm, patriarch of N.J. Methodism who was one year older than his country. Exhibit of his writings, papers and memorabilia from Drew Library.

DREW LIBRARY ACQUIRES PREACHER'S JOURNALS

During the past month two important manuscript collections relating to Northern New Jersey Methodism have been acquired by Drew University Library: The journals and papers of the Reverends John Summerfield Coit (1829-1868) and James Buckley Faulks (1838-1920). The Coit papers, which have been given to Drew by a granddaughter, Miss Grace Coit Meleney, of White Plains, N.Y., include an 18-volume journal, 160 sermon outlines, essays prepared while Coit was a student at the Pennington School along with pastoral records and receipts of his several appointments in the Newark Conference.

A copy of the Faulks journal covering the important Civil War period, when Faulks served with the U.S. Christian Commission, has been deposited at Drew by Mr. and Mrs. Emory Fretz of Ridgewood, N.J., through the efforts of Dr. Henry Lambdin.

TRAVELING EXHIBIT ON FRANCIS ASBURY

A small exhibit of Asbury memorabilia from the collection of Drew University is available on request for use at special celebrations in local churches. The exhibit includes several mounted prints and photographs, a set of ordination certificates signed by our first Bishop, along with a pair of spectacles he wore. When used with historical items from a local congregation, this makes an attractive addition to an anniversary or other historical observance. Contact Dr. Kenneth E. Rowe, Drew University Library, Madison, N.J., 07940, 377-3000, Ext. 243.

GRAVE MARKERS FOR UNITED METHODIST MINISTERS

A limited supply of official markers for graves of United Methodist pastors are available from the Conference Commission on Archives & History at \$15.00 each. The bronze markers, which contain a raised figure of a mounted circuit rider and the inscription, United Methodist Minister, may be bolted to the head stone or may be implanted in the ground. Contact the Rev. Paul Spiecker, 452 Lafayette Avenue, Hawthorne, N.J. 07506. (Phone 427-0725).